

the Chair be authorized to appoint conferees with a ratio of seven to five on the part of the Senate, all with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Presiding Officer appointed Ms. STABENOW, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. HARKIN, Mr. BAUCUS, Mr. BROWN, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. BENNET, Mr. COCHRAN, Mr. CHAMBLISS, Mr. ROBERTS, Mr. BOOZMAN, and Mr. HOEVEN conferees on the part of the Senate.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that there be a period of morning business for debate only until 6 p.m., with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees; that Senators be permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each for debate only; and at 6 p.m. I ask that I be recognized.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Florida is recognized.

CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. NELSON. As I understand what the majority leader has just done, the Senate has appointed conferees on the farm bill. That is an example that when there is a political will, we can get together and get things accomplished.

The National Institutes of Health, NASA, and all of the intelligence agencies—72 percent of all the civilians in the intelligence agencies, including the CIA, are furloughed. We are in a war with those people who are trying to do harm to us. We are having these people furloughed all because of a small group, the tea party, in one House of one branch of government who are intent on their agenda. It is irresponsible and reckless.

The truth is, if the Speaker would just bring up what we call the continuing resolution, which is all of the appropriations bills put together up to a date certain, November 15, it would pass overwhelmingly with Democrats and Republicans both voting for it, not the extremist small group down there, but the Speaker doesn't bring it up.

What I see happening—if this lasts for more than a day or two—is that the American people will be so irritated and upset that their lives are disrupted because they can't get government services they are going to insist that their government open once again.

I have an example. The fine work the people I have the privilege of working with and what they do for the people of my State never ceases to amaze me. It is not unusual when I am going into a meeting or airport or walking down the street when I am in the State of Florida, it is commonplace for people to come up and say to me: I want you to know that I appreciate so much what you did to help me or my mother or my son or my brother who is a veteran.

When they say those things, they are talking about all of these dedicated people whom I have the great privilege of working with to help the people of our State on the day-to-day necessities of their daily lives, such as an emergency situation, they realize their passport has expired or they lost their passport or didn't get their veterans payment or need help getting their brother into a veterans hospital or something happened to their Social Security payment or they need information about this particular piece of legislation or they are concerned about somebody they saw whom they thought was doing things and they need them to be referenced to the correct agency on a security matter. It goes on and on.

These wonderful people we have working with us—some young, some old—many of the ones who have been with me for years are so dedicated and work day and night. They work their fingers to the bone. They know exactly whom to call or to e-mail to get things done for people back home in need. We know what is going to happen. When they call any one of our offices in Florida, they are going to get a recording of my voice, telling them what has happened and how all of these folks have been furloughed and giving them an emergency contact as the one lifeline we can provide.

What happens next? If reasonable people were doing this, we would have never shut down in the first place—people who are bipartisan, who have some common sense, who recognize we can't have it our way all the time but in the best of American tradition respect the other fellow's point of view and then work out differences to achieve a consensus in order to gain a workable solution. If those kinds of reasonable folks had been operating, then we would never have shut down in the first place.

We have heard about this over and over in the speeches today: I voted for, in the Budget Committee, a budget. It came out of committee and came to the floor. We had over 100 amendments. It took hours and hours. We finally passed a budget which was the outline for the appropriations for the next fiscal year. We passed that in the Senate 6 months ago. The House did the same. They passed out a budget. But when we asked to go to a conference committee to get agreement for working out the differences between the two, that small group would not let the conference not only not convene but even be appointed.

I think the majority leader of the Senate will tell us we are ready to meet right now, but they have to open the government again. We have to put back to work these people who are trying to serve the American people and to protect the American people. Hopefully, if the American people hear these messages, they will get sufficiently agitated and insist that, once again, the crowd that has shut us down instead should open the government.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to call for an end to the senseless government shutdown and urge Members of the House to set aside political games for the betterment of the country.

The American people are tired of our country being held hostage and our economic recovery threatened just to score political points, and justifiably so. There are real consequences for this irresponsibility.

Shutting down the government for 3 or 4 weeks would reduce real gross domestic product by 1.4 percentage points in the fourth quarter alone, and a shutdown longer than 2 months would likely precipitate another recession.

But my colleagues don't have to take my word for it. Here is what the U.S. Chamber of Commerce said in a letter on this very topic: . . . "it is not in the best interests of the U.S. business community or the American people to risk even a brief government shutdown that might trigger disruptive consequences or raise new policy uncertainties washing over the U.S. economy."

David Cote, the chief executive officer of Honeywell, stated that if you want to create economic disruption and uncertainty for businesses, then a government shutdown is a great way to do it.

I couldn't agree more.

The truth is we simply can't afford another self-inflicted wound to our economy, especially not at a time when things are finally turning around. We had big news in our State this month. The unemployment rate is down to 5.1 percent. National unemployment is at 7.3 percent. That is the lowest point since December of 2008. The housing market is bouncing back with existing home sales reaching a 6½ year high in August. Retail sales are up, and so far this year we have added 1.5 million private sector jobs. We are not where we need to be, but we are moving in the right direction and it is clear that now is not the time to take a step back. Yet here we are again, right in the middle of another manufactured crisis.

On Friday, the Senate passed a bill to keep the government running that is free of any ideological policy provisions. The Senate bill would fund the government at the same level as last year through November 15 and would give Congress and the President time to negotiate a balanced deficit reduction plan.

The commonsense next step would be for the House to take up and pass the Senate's bill. That is democracy. They should put the bill before the House and, by most beliefs, it would pass and it would end the shutdown. Instead, the House has sent us four separate versions of the legislation with full knowledge that the Senate would not agree to them and the President stating he would veto them. Each of the House proposals would have delayed